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SUBJECT: BOSNIA: OSD DAS FATA'S VISIT HIGHLIGHTS SECURITY
PARTNERSHIP, NATO INTEGRATION

REF: SARAJEVO 373

Classified By: CDA Judith Cefkin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy Daniel Fata visited Sarajevo February 21 for discussions with senior Bosnian leaders on Bosnia's NATO integration process and continued U.S. support for defense reform and Bosnia's Euro-Atlantic integration. DASD Fata made the following points: congratulations on invitation to join NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP); participation in PfP requires a national-level, and not just defense ministry, commitment; the U.S. will continue to provide assistance and support for Bosnia's defense, but Bosnia must sustain its own defense budget to complete existing and future reform efforts; appreciate all Bosnia is doing in GWOT; International Criminal Tribunal cooperation and action remains critically important; U.S. supports the Ahtisaari process for Kosovo and hopes all parties in the region will act responsibly in ensuring that peace and stability is maintained.

¶2. (C) Summary Continued. All Bosnian officials pledged a strong state-level commitment to becoming an active NATO PfP partner, and undertake the reforms and devote the necessary resources to prepare Bosnia for full alliance membership. Taking advantage of a domestic area of expertise, the Ministry of Defense shared broad plans to make demining Bosnia's niche NATO capacity. The senior political and defense leaders all noted the crucial role the U.S. must continue to play in driving the reform agenda forward, but requested USG understanding of the need to take a "balanced" approach, particularly in terms of additional coalition deployments, on some areas of joint interest. On Kosovo, the Bosnian leadership across the ethnic spectrum recognized the need for a quick resolution of the final status process, and

accepted DASD Fata's request to manage any fall-out in Bosnia from the decision in a responsible manner. End summary.

DASD FATA HOLDS HIGH-LEVEL DISCUSSIONS

13. (SBU) On February 21, DASD Fata held separate meetings with Bosnian Presidents Nebojsa Radmanovic and Haris Silajdzic, Prime Minister Nikola Spiric, Acting Minister of Defense Marina Pendes, Minister of Defense-designate Selmo Cikotic, Chairman of the Joint Staff Lt. Gen. Sifet Podzic, and the Co-Chairman of the Inter-Ministerial PFP Working Group, Assistant Defense Minister Zoran Sajinovic. In all meetings, DASD Fata explained the broad parameters of the PFP program, highlighted the importance of properly resourcing Bosnia's chosen partnership priorities and of the entire state meeting all PFP responsibilities (including full ICTY compliance), and pledged continued U.S. support and engagement as Bosnia moves through the NATO integration process. DASD Fata also sought out the leadership's views on potential fall-out in Bosnia from the Kosovo status decision.

NATO ENGAGEMENT: COMMITMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY

14. (C) All of the Bosnian leaders unequivocally stated their full support to see Bosnia as a full member of NATO in the near term. They thanked the United States for its support of the PFP invitation and backing of the defense reform process. All parties agreed that the PFP invitation and the initial success of defense reform were truly remarkable milestones in an otherwise contentious and unpromising political climate. President Silajdzic noted that PFP was a "real opportunity"

for the entire state to move forward and drive the broader political reform movements. In this light, DASD Fata stressed that it was important that Bosnia clearly identify its priorities within PFP and develop a clear plan for becoming an active and complete partner of the alliance. The Presidency members and Prime Minister Spiric recognized the responsibilities NATO placed on the entire state and committed the government to fully engage with NATO to meet alliance membership standards. They also acknowledged the importance of continuing cooperation with ICTY, as required in the Riga Summit declaration.

15. (C) DASD Fata noted that in establishing priorities, Bosnia should also look to fully resource its commitments. Echoing concerns raised by Defense Minister-designate Cikotic, Acting Defense Minister Pendes, and CHOD Podzic, Fata told the Presidency and Prime Minister Spiric that the state budget needed to adequately provide for Bosnia's defense needs and full PFP participation. Cikotic in particular was concerned about declining resources, noting as it currently stood, Bosnia's defense allocations were 1.7% of GDP, below the 2% required by NATO. While pointing to the state's limited financial resources, Prime Minister Spiric pledged not to follow the example of other NATO partners which decreased the defense budget after joining PFP, and stated his intention to work with the Ministry of Defense and Finance to fully fund reform and partnership activities.

16. (C) DASD Fata also stressed the imperative to see defense reform through to its full implementation. Acting Minister Pendes and CHOD Podzic said that the reforms had inarguably slowed in recent months as they confronted larger political realities, but both voiced their commitment to finish the job. Podzic said that he hoped to have the Armed Forces units established by the new force structure to be fully staffed and operational by the end of the year. Pendes recognized the delays in staffing the civilian jobs in the Ministry of Defense, but indicated by the time Cikotic assumes office in late April, a full staff could be in place. As for the still unresolved property issues between the state-level ministry and the two entities, Pendes indicated that the issue was still far from resolution, but said the ministry had submitted a plan to break the impasse to the Council of

Ministers. Pendes added that in the short-term, a separate agreement could be reached to transfer a limited amount of property necessary for coalition support activities to the Ministry of Defense.

BOSNIA A SMALL STEP AHEAD OF THE PACK

17. (C) Assistant Defense Minister and Co-Chairman of the Inter-Ministerial PfP Working Group Zoran Sajinovic briefed DASD Fata on where Bosnia stood in the PfP and NATO integration process. Sajinovic agreed with the assessment that Bosnia was slightly ahead of the other recent PfP invitees, as it had already undertaken the basic technical and legal steps required by the alliance for PfP partners. Bosnia's Presentation Document has been submitted to Brussels, and the working group is currently in the process of completing the PARP survey, which should be finished in April. Sajinovic said that NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer would visit Sarajevo next month to sign the Security Agreement, and that the National Security Authority, which would coordinate securing of classified material and issuing security clearances, would soon be established under the Ministry of Security. Despite this substantial progress, Sajinovic noted that some ministries were still not staffed or equipped to deal with the requirements of PfP, and further progress could be delayed. Sajinovic said he shared the leaderships' goal of moving quickly from PfP into NATO, but that their stated goal of 2009 was not realistic. In Sajinovic's assessment, Bosnia would have a viable candidacy

"sometime after 2010."

U.S. ASSISTANCE, SUPPORT STILL REQUIRED

18. (C) It was clear in all discussions that the U.S. is both expected to remain Bosnia's strongest international partner and provide continued assistance in moving the reform agenda forward. Acting Minister Pendes told DASD Fata that Bosnia's soon to be published defense review will definitively state that the United States is Bosnia's most important strategic partner. DASD Fata informed the Bosnian leadership that the United States could be counted on to assist Bosnia in its partnership priorities, but that any support would be to "complement not supplement" the resources that Bosnia itself would have to contribute to its activities. DASD Fata also urged that while our bilateral security relationship continues to strengthen, Bosnia should not neglect its European partners. In response, Cikotic, echoing comments made by others, noted that Bosnians could "not ignore the fact that we are geographically and physically in Europe, but the war drew all of us close to the United States. A European partnership would be more practical, but we know that without the United States, there will be no positive changes."

DEMINE AS NICHE CAPABILITY

19. (C) Acting Minister Pendes informed DASD Fata that the Ministry of Defense was developing a comprehensive plan to establish demining as the activity offered to the alliance as a niche capability. Pendes noted Bosnia's extensive experience with demining, along with existing domestic infrastructure to support demining as a niche capability. She said that Bosnia could augment its military demining force, and offer training to other NATO partners. Ideally, according to Podzic and Pendes, the military demining units could also deploy on coalition peace support missions. Commenting on the proposal, Prime Minister Spiric said that it had his full support and developing demining as a niche capability would be a priority for his government. Spiric also voiced his support for establishing further niche capabilities that could be offered to the alliance. DASD Fata welcomed the initiative and encouraged BiH to undertake such training. (Comment. We have thought the demining proposal to be a good idea since the ministry first brought

it to our attention in January. Bosnia certainly possesses the demining infrastructure and expertise to offer a valuable skill to NATO. Furthermore, engaging the Armed Forces in mine clearance in Bosnia could serve to provide the newly established force with a positive public role. End comment.)

COALITION DEPLOYMENTS: EOD IS ENOUGH FOR NOW

¶10. (C) In another broad area of consensus, the Bosnian leadership requested that the U.S. respect political and resource limitations in not pushing for additional Bosnian coalition deployments in the near-term. Agreeing with DASD Fata's description of the mutual benefits of the successful deployments of the Bosnian Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) unit to Iraq, and the recent Presidency decision to extend its mandate until the end of 2007, Radmanovic, Silajdzic, Pendes, Podzic and Cikotic all stated their belief that Bosnia would be incapable of providing additional support to Iraq or Afghanistan this year. Silajdzic, while expressing his support for the EOD mission, stated that the public was not ready to accept further deployments as "people are afraid to get involved in any other adventures." Radmanovic stressed the importance of the EOD deployment, and the need for Bosnia to continue to be a contributor to global security. But he also said that there must be "a very

cautious approach" in handling requests for additional deployments, and the Bosnian leadership had to better explain to the public that this was an important responsibility in regards to NATO. Cikotic also voiced his plans to continue with the EOD mission, but also confirmed that this was the extent of what would be publicly palatable at this time.

¶11. (C) From the Ministry of Defense angle, concerns over the support missions primarily focused on the financial and logistical strains of additional deployments. Referencing an earlier request from General Casey to provide a 12-15 man security detachment to support the EOD unit, Acting Minister Pendes told DASD Fata that the ministry and military did not have the resources to support an augmented force. Pendes requested that the EOD deployment remain unaltered. Podzic, a strong and vocal supporter of the EOD and future Bosnian deployments, also cited limited resources as the reason Armed Forces could not realize additional deployments in 2007. Podzic said that the military needed a "break" to create the new units and fill out the new force structure. Saying that "reality is not always what we wish it to be," Podzic pledged to continue training and have a demining and possibly infantry unit ready for deployment next year. DASD Fata acknowledged Pendes' and Podzic's concerns, and promised to raise them at the Department of Defense.

KOSOVO

¶12. (C) In line with their previous statements, the Bosnian leadership across the ethnic spectrum pledged to not use the Kosovo status decision for political purposes in Bosnia. President Radmanovic stated that there was no disagreement within the Presidency as to the necessity to resolve the situation in the near term, and that the status process was "an internal issue" that should be resolved between Serbia, Kosovo and the international community. President Silajdzic echoed Radmanovic's view that the matter should be resolved quickly, saying that Bosnians were "tired of their region being on the front page of the newspaper." Silajdzic noted that Kosovo was an issue "that belonged to another state" but cautioned that any settlement could not leave a "clear victor and a clear loser." Prime Minister Spiric said that Bosnian leaders "must be dedicated to this country," and any attempts at linking Kosovo independence to Bosnia would be inappropriate.

EXTENSIVE AND POSITIVE MEDIA COVERAGE

¶13. (U) Bosnian print and electronic media extensively

covered DASD Fata,s visit, focusing primarily on the meeting with the Bosnian Presidency and the statements that followed.

Bosnia,s highest circulation daily carried a report under the headline "BiH a Strong Partner of the US." The paper noted that DASD Fata had reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to providing continued assistance to Bosnia in defense reform and the modernization of the Armed Forces. Overall, media coverage of DASD Fata,s visit touched on many of the points we have been stressing over the previous months. The visit was a strong reminder that the U.S. remains, and will remain, engaged in Bosnia in the future and stressed that PfP brings many benefits and renewed regional responsibility to Bosnia. The coverage helped to balance previous reports that the international community was pulling its stakes and heading out of Bosnia.

COMMENT

¶14. (C) From our perspective, DASD Fata's visit to Sarajevo was an unequivocal success. The visit served to demonstrate to both the leadership and general public alike the enduring

U.S. support and commitment to Bosnia's continued integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Furthermore, a friendly, but strong message, was also delivered to the leadership that their chosen path entails serious commitments and responsibilities that will require a serious dedication of effort and resources in the coming years. The visit laid bare that while substantial and real progress has been realized in defense reform and Euro-Atlantic integration, much more ground needs to be covered before Bosnia is prepared to be a full and active participant in Euro-Atlantic institutions.

¶15. (C) For the Bosnia leadership, DASD Fata's visit also provided a rare opportunity to engage on these issues with a high-level USG delegation. Without exception, the officials were prepared to discuss NATO and our bilateral security relationship and demonstrated a stronger grasp of the issues involved than we have witnessed previously. It is important to note that there was a uniformity of position and perspective among the Presidency, Prime Minister Spiric, Pendes, Podzic, and Cikotic that Bosnia's future clearly lay in NATO, and that the costs of entering the alliance were inconsequential compared to the expected benefits of security and Western integration. The leadership was also clear that, for both political and resource reasons, Bosnia will likely be unable to deploy additional forces or units other than the EOD unit to coalition support operations in the near term.

DASD Fata has cleared this cable.
CEFKIN